

Service Area Plan

Department of Health

Restaurant and Food Safety, Well and Septic Permitting and Other Environmental Health Services (44004)

Service Area Background Information

Service Area Description

This service area enforces Virginia's sanitary regulations that are designed to protect the public health of Virginians and visitors to Virginia. This is accomplished by enforcing regulations pertaining to food, hotels, summer camps, campgrounds, migrant labor camps, swimming pools, private wells, onsite sewage disposal, and other environmental health laws. Products and services include:

- Customer service, such as technical assistance, training, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, and maintenance of records;
- Inspection and enforcement of food safety, swimming pools, milk plants, hotels, summer camps, campgrounds, migrant labor camps, private well and onsite septic system laws and regulations;
- Permitting of food establishments, hotels, milk plants, summer camps, campgrounds, migrant labor camps, and swimming pools;
- Collecting specimens of animals suspected of having rabies and transporting them to DCLS for testing; and
- Responding to citizen complaints concerning environmental health hazards with the potential of endangering the public health e.g. standing water, lead exposure, unsanitary disposal of trash, rodent infestations, etc.

Service Area Alignment to Mission

This service area directly aligns with VDH's mission of promoting and protecting the health of all Virginians by reducing environmental and communicable disease hazards.

Service Area Statutory Authority

Section 3.1:530 of the Code of Virginia establishes regulations for inspections and permitting of plants that process and distribute Grade A market milk and Grade A market milk products.

Section 3.1:796 establishes requirements for notifying VDH of any animal suspected to have rabies and for the Health Department to approve of confinement facilities, to confine suspected animals and to test suspected animals for rabies.

Title 32.1, Chapter 6 establishes requirements for inspections and permitting of private wells, on site sewage disposal (septic) systems, swimming pool posting requirements, migrant labor camps, and alternative discharging sewage systems. This section also authorizes the Health Department to ensure that marinas and migrant labor camps meet sewerage standards.

Title 35.1 of the Code of Virginia establishes requirements for food service inspections and permitting of hotels, restaurants, summer camps, campgrounds, and state institutions.

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Service Area Customer Base

| Customer(s) | Served | Potential |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Citizens exposed to a potentially rabid animal | 14,500 | 15,000 |
| Food establishment owners | 26,500 | 27,300 |
| Hotels, summer camps, campgrounds, swimming pools and migrant labor camps | 6,400 | 6,600 |
| Licensed well drillers, contractors, engineers, and soil evaluators | 1,000 | 1,030 |
| Other governmental agencies | 200 | 250 |
| Owners of private wells and/or onsite sewage disposal systems | 1,000,000 | 1,200,000 |
| Plants that distribute Grade A milk and milk products | 12 | 12 |
| Public affected by foodborne illnesses, contaminated private wells, or failing septic systems and other environmental health hazards | 1,000 | 10,000 |

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Anticipated Changes In Service Area Customer Base

Food establishment owners:

- The number of permitted food establishments tends to increase at a rate slightly greater than that of the general population, due in part to an increasing tendency of Virginians to eat food prepared outside the home and in part to an increase in establishments catering to tourists, such as hotels and temporary events.
- The trend towards increased ethnic diversification of food establishments will continue. Potential language barriers and different ethnic views of proper food handling increase the risk of foodborne outbreaks and increase the burden on local health departments to ensure that the owners and food managers understand and comply with pertinent regulations.
- The trend towards an increased presence of chain food establishments will also continue. Chains typically require more standardized food safety training and standards of their owned and franchised restaurants. They are also more likely to use common food suppliers, increasing the risk of foodborne outbreaks involving multiple establishments.
- These changes will not occur uniformly throughout the Commonwealth, with overall increased growth and diversification concentrated in the fastest growing areas.

Owners of private wells and/or onsite sewage disposal systems:

- Private wells and onsite sewage systems exist in virtually all jurisdictions in the Commonwealth.
- As the number of households and the demand for more onsite sewage disposal systems increase, the availability of soils capable of supporting traditional onsite sewage disposal will be reduced. Parcels of land with favorable potential for onsite sewage disposal systems will become less common.
- Alternative systems allow for onsite waste treatment on properties that cannot support a traditional sewage disposal system. As the cost of alternative sewage disposal systems has decreased in relation to the value of properties in many parts of the Commonwealth, the proportion of new onsite system permits utilizing alternative technologies will continue to grow. This is particularly true in regions of the Commonwealth with high property values and relatively poor suitability for onsite sewage disposal systems.
- The increased availability of alternative systems decreases the demand for centralized sewerage in many communities.

Citizens exposed to a potentially rabid animal:

- Rabies is endemic in Virginia and can be carried by a variety of animals, such as bats, raccoons, cats, dogs, skunks, and foxes. The types of animals involved in potential human exposures differ by region and by population density.
- People can be infected with rabies through contact with infected secretions from a rabid animal. Since 1998, two Virginians have died from rabies.
- Reports of potential exposures to rabid animals occur in every major jurisdiction and affect every age group.
- The cost of vaccination in persons potentially exposed to rabies poses a significant financial burden on these citizens and significant distress on those affected and their families.

Other governmental agencies:

- VDH provides and receives environmental health information to and from a wide variety of governmental agencies at the state, federal and local levels. It is anticipated that this interdepartmental coordination will increase to better meet the needs of Virginia's citizens.
- VDH works with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) on milk plant issues, West Nile virus and other vector concerns, and food safety. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) partners with the Health Department on environmental health issues that come under their jurisdiction, such as wastewater treatment, water quality, and groundwater protection.
- VDH works with such federal agencies as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on such issues as food protection,

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water contamination, and milk plants, respectively.

- VDH also works with local governments throughout the Commonwealth to ensure that their citizens' food, well water, and pools are safe and clean.

Plants that distribute Grade A milk and milk products:

- There are 12 permitted milk plants in Virginia.
- It is anticipated that the number of permitted facilities will continue to remain low.

Licensed well drillers, contractors, engineers, and soil evaluators:

- The number of licensed well drillers, contractors, and engineers will continue to increase as the demand for new housing grows and as the number of new alternative and experimental onsite sewage disposal systems increases.
- It is expected that the number of authorized onsite soil evaluators (AOSEs) will grow significantly as this training program expands.

Hotels, summer camps, campgrounds swimming pools and migrant labor camps:

- The number of hotels, motels, bed & breakfasts and campgrounds are increasing as more and more tourists and businesses find Virginia an attractive setting for conferences and vacations.
- Swimming pools are increasing in number and complexity. As more planned communities with integrated amenities are becoming increasingly popular, it is expected the number of public swimming pools requiring permits and inspection will also rise. Swimming parks with complicated water attractions are also on the rise due to their popularity with Virginians.
- It is expected that the number of summer camps will increase as more working parents find summer camps an excellent source of daycare for their children out of school during the summer.
- The increased number of immigrants and the need for inexpensive labor is fueling the increase in the number of migrant labor camps in Virginia.

Public affected by foodborne illnesses, contaminated private wells, or failing septic systems and other environmental health hazards:

- Everyone who lives in or visits Virginia is potentially served by VDH's restaurant and food safety programs, by its well and septic permitting, and by its other environmental health services.
- VDH expects the general public and business customer base to continue to increase over the next few years, as the number of people eating at permitted food establishments and drinking private well water continues to grow.
- The potential for onsite sewage disposal system malfunctions will increase due to the increased population being served by these systems.
- Compared to traditional onsite systems, alternative wastewater systems have an increased risk of failure if not properly operated and maintained.
- The number of Virginians affected by foodborne illnesses will continue to rise. Many bacteria and other contaminants are associated with specific foods, such as E. coli O157:H7 with hamburgers or Salmonella with eggs. The concentration of meat and other food production and processing into high volume farms and factories increases the risk that food will become contaminated and that such contamination will impact a larger number of food establishments. Effective and appropriately timed inspections are key to enforcing safe food handling and preparation practices that minimize the risk that such foods will remain contaminated by the time they reach the consumer or that initially safe foods will become contaminated during the food preparation process.
- As the general public base grows, the population density increases and local districts make it easier to file a citizen complaint via the internet, the quantity of complaints received will increase.

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Service Area Products and Services

- Inspection and enforcement
 - Thorough and consistent inspection and enforcement of laws and regulations address structural design and operational practices for food facilities, swimming pools, milk plants, hotels, summer camps, campgrounds, migrant labor camps, private wells, and onsite sewage disposal systems. The goal of inspection and enforcement is to protect the public from injury and disease by significantly reducing the environmental risk that can arise from health hazards associated with permitted facilities.
- Permitting
 - The permitting and plan review services ensure the facility meets all applicable health codes. The issuing of permits is based on well-established health, safety, and environmental considerations intended to protect the public from health and safety hazards.
- Animal Confinement and Testing for Rabies
 - The goal of animal confinement and testing services is to prevent any human death due to rabies. Rabies is fatal to humans only if post-exposure vaccination shots are not administered appropriately or are administered too late.
- Citizen Complaints
 - This service involves responding to citizen complaints concerning environmental health issues in a timely and customer focused manner. Where a violation is confirmed to exist, this service involves initiating and carrying out the administrative processes established to bring about compliance with all health codes.
- Customer Service
 - Good customer service is implicit in all our relationships, whether information sharing, FOIA requests, inspections or enforcement actions. Our goal is to be honest, professional courteous, responsive, open, timely, flexible, credible, and accurate. Providing outstanding customer service is one of the best ways we can fulfill our mission to protect human health.

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Factors Impacting Service Area Products and Services

Proficiency in providing environmental health services requires significant training and experience. Competition from the private sector and from other governmental entities, both within and outside Virginia, impact the ability of VDH to appropriately retain and recruit highly trained environmental health specialists. Increased staff turnover decreases efficiency and thereby increases the cost of services rendered.

Improvement and procurement of new and better technology can assist the staff with the increased demand for service by making routine tasks more efficient and less time consuming (e.g. automating online request for service forms and computer scheduling).

Emerging pathogens, complex water recreation attractions and increased attention to food and water security has necessitated a critical demand for continuing education for environmental health staff.

Funding levels for service areas impact the timeliness and quality of service as the demand for all environmental health services provided increases.

Increased complexity of onsite sewage disposal systems requires additional staff time to perform plan reviews, permitting and inspections.

Environmental health services require increasingly complex information technology systems to meet the increased demand for services.

Anticipated Changes To Service Area Products and Services

VDH will continue to incorporate the Virginia Environmental Health Information System (VENIS) into all environmental health service areas for a centralized database.

Continued turnover of key positions will further challenge VDH's ability to maintain and improve the quantity and quality of service. A significant driver of this turnover is the pay gap between the Commonwealth's pay scale for trained Environmental Health Specialists and the prevailing salary offered by the private sector.

Due to the increase customer base, customer assistance requests will continue to increase.

Service Area Financial Summary

The chief source of funding for Environmental Health Services is from the General Fund, local matching funds, and revenue from environmental health permitting fees. Some districts receive funds from various federal nongeneral funds, state and local grant programs.

| | <u>Fiscal Year 2007</u> | | <u>Fiscal Year 2008</u> | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| | <u>General Fund</u> | <u>Nongeneral Fund</u> | <u>General Fund</u> | <u>Nongeneral Fund</u> |
| Base Budget | \$14,329,025 | \$18,200,611 | \$14,329,025 | \$18,200,611 |
| Changes To Base | \$2,000,210 | \$2,169,898 | \$2,000,210 | \$2,169,898 |
| SERVICE AREA TOTAL | \$16,329,235 | \$20,370,509 | \$16,329,235 | \$20,370,509 |

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Service Area Objectives, Measures, and Strategies

Objective 44004.01

Reduce environmental and communicable disease hazards due to contaminated wells and failing onsite sewage disposal systems.

Protection of the public from the dangers of contaminated wells and failing septic systems is of critical importance to ensure the health of our rivers and streams as well as the health of those who drink private well water or live in proximity to failing systems. Hazards may be present due to improper site identification, construction or maintenance. VDH provides customer assistance and inspection, permitting and enforcement of wells and onsite sewage disposal systems as mandated by Section 32.1.

This Objective Supports the Following Agency Goals:

- Assure provision of clean and safe drinking water supplies.
(This objective is also aligned with Virginia’s long term objective to protect, conserve and wisely develop our natural, historical and cultural resources.)

This Objective Has The Following Measure(s):

- **Measure 44004.01.01**

Percent of repair applications granted for failing onsite septic sewage disposal systems.

Measure Type: Output **Measure Frequency:** Annually

Measure Baseline: VDH issued repair permits for 80% of all known failing onsite sewage disposal systems in FY06.

Measure Target: 85% during FY07.

Measure Source and Calculation:

The number of applications for repairs and number of repair permits issued can be obtained from VENIS and other databases maintained by some health districts. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of repair applications received by the number of repair permits issued during that fiscal year.

- **Measure 44004.01.02**

Percent of onsite sewage disposal system construction permits issued without paid claims from the state’s Indemnification Fund for failed onsite sewage disposal systems.

Measure Type: Outcome **Measure Frequency:** Annually

Measure Baseline: VDH paid claims on 0.0005% (15 paid claims/30,000 issued permits) of sewage disposal system construction permits from the state’s Indemnification Fund for failed onsite sewage disposal systems in FY05.

Measure Target: Less than 0.0005% during FY07.

Measure Source and Calculation:

The number of onsite sewage disposal system permits issued can be obtained from the VDH’s VENIS database and other district databases. The number of paid Indemnification Fund claims is tracked by VDH’s Office of Environmental Health Services. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of paid claims from the state’s Indemnification Fund by the number of onsite sewage disposal system construction permits issued within the fiscal year, multiplying that fraction by 100%.

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Objective 44004.01 Has the Following Strategies:

- VDH will collaborate with other agencies involving wells and onsite sewage disposal systems on issues of mutual concern, such as alternative wastewater systems, substandard housing, and surface water issues.
- VDH will continuously update and improve its permitting and inspection program as new guidance is developed by federal, state and other partners.
- VDH will minimize duplication of efforts by promoting communication and interoperability of state, local and other databases.
- VDH will investigate well and onsite sewage disposal complaints in a timely manner.
- VDH will provide customer assistance and conduct thorough and consistent inspections to achieve compliance with well and onsite sewage disposal safety laws and regulations.
- VDH will maintain a strong and motivated environmental health work force through appropriate staffing levels and competitive salary structures.

Objective 44004.02

Reduce environmental and communicable disease hazards at food establishments, hotels, swimming pools, migrant labor camps, campgrounds and milk plants.

Protection of the public from the dangers of disease outbreaks is of critical importance to ensure the health of every person who eats at a Virginia food establishment, swims in a community pool, stays in a hotel or campground, lives in a migrant labor camp, or consumes products from permitted milk plants. Hazards may be present due to improper storage, preparation or handling of food inadequate treatment of water or from unsafe camp, campground or hotel construction.

This Objective Supports the Following Agency Goals:

- Prevent and control the transmission of communicable diseases.
(This objective is also aligned with Virginia's long term objective to inspire and support Virginians towards healthy lives and strong and resilient families.)
- Assure provision of safe food at restaurants and other places where food is served to the public.
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This Objective Has The Following Measure(s):

- **Measure 44004.02.01**

Frequency of restaurant inspections.

Measure Type: Output **Measure Frequency:** Annually

Measure Baseline: In FY05, 60% of all scheduled restaurant inspections, in accordance with VDH policy which establishes an inspection frequency based on the restaurant's risk classification, were conducted within 30 days of the scheduled date.

Measure Target: 65% during FY07.

Measure Source and Calculation:

Virginia Environmental Information System database reports

Objective 44004.02 Has the Following Strategies:

- VDH will collaborate with other agencies involving food establishments on issues of mutual concern, such as boil water notices and outbreaks of foodborne illnesses.

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- VDH will continuously update and improve its inspection program as new guidance is developed by federal, state and other partners.
- VDH will minimize duplication of efforts by promoting communication and interoperability of state, local and other databases.
- VDH will investigate food, hotel, campground, migrant labor camp, pool and milk plant complaints on a timely basis.
- VDH will increase the public's utilization of on-line food establishment inspection reports through public awareness campaigns.
- VDH will provide customer assistance and conduct thorough and standardized inspections to achieve compliance with food and milk plant safety laws and regulations.
- VDH will maintain a strong and motivated environmental health work force through appropriate staffing levels and competitive salary structures.

Objective 44004.03

Reduce human exposures to rabid animals.

Rabies is endemic throughout Virginia. Since 1998, two Virginians have died from rabies and thousands of others have had to undergo a month long course of vaccinations to prevent infection.

This Objective Supports the Following Agency Goals:

- Prevent and control the transmission of communicable diseases.
(This objective is also aligned with Virginia's long term objective to inspire and support Virginians towards healthy lives and strong and resilient families.)

This Objective Has The Following Measure(s):

- **Measure 44004.03.01**

Percent of animal confinements successfully closed by the prescribed release date.

Measure Type: Outcome **Measure Frequency:** Annually

Measure Baseline: VDH completed 98% of required animal confinements by prescribed release date in FY06.

Measure Target: At least 98% during FY07.

Measure Source and Calculation:

This measure is calculated using information from VENIS and other District databases. Animal confinement reports show when confined animal may be released. The percentage of closed animal confinements is calculated by dividing the number of closed animal confinements that were reported released on the prescribed release date over the total number of "non-rabid" animal confinements.

Objective 44004.03 Has the Following Strategies:

- VDH will improve awareness of rabies among the general population through periodic education campaigns to include information on:
 - Making sure that pets are up to date on their rabies vaccinations.
 - Staying away from stray and wild animals.
 - Seeing one's doctor if bitten by a stray or wild animal.
 - Reporting animal bites to the locality's appropriate animal control agency.

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- VDH will improve awareness of rabies among the medical and veterinary community to include information on:
 - The importance of notifying VDH of potential human exposures to rabies.
 - Updated rabies post-exposure vaccination recommendations.
 - Providing pre-exposure vaccination to employees at risk of exposure to rabid animals.
 - Ensuring that post-exposure prophylaxis is provided to those potentially exposed to rabies.
- VDH will improve coordination with local entities responsible for animal control to ensure appropriate confinement and testing of animals of notification of people potentially exposed to a rabid animal.